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Nov. 1-14, 2010 • Issue 187 • One Dollar

# STREETVIBES

ADVOCATING JUSTICE • BUILDING COMMUNITY

## Marching, Remembering, DEMANDING



Supporters march through downtown Cincinnati in support of homeless people. About 150 people participated in the Oct. 16 demonstration. Aimee Willhoite.

### Homeless Awareness Week in Cincinnati

By Carly Tamborski  
Contributing Writer

Citizens marched Oct. 16 through downtown Cincinnati and Over-the-Rhine to demand an end to homelessness, a positive resolution for gentrification and reasonable wages.

The march, part of Homeless Awareness Week, Oct. 15-23, kicked off from Buddy's Place on Vine Street, where marchers rallied.

The marchers stopped at points highlighting places where, homeless advocates say, unjust acts against homeless people occurred, including places where the Cincinnati Center City Development Corp. (3CDC) and the city have displaced people from low-income housing and public spaces.

"This march is for justice, Joanne Burton, public-controlled government, living wages, the end of home-

See March, P. 9

## How I Snuck in on the Dalai Lama

Even mystical security has its weaknesses

By Gregory Flannery  
Editor

The "self" is an illusion, according to the Dalai Lama, so it's fitting that I saw him under false pretenses, passing the security checkpoint under an assumed name. The U.S. State Department had ordered me kept out, but I got in.

The security process for screening journalists for the Dalai Lama's visit Oct. 21 was almost as obscure and com-

plex as Tibetan Buddhism itself. I was in, then I was out, then I was back in. Finally, on the day of his appearance, a university staffer handed me a press badge and said, "Here. You're Eric Frisbee."

Eric Frisbee is a photographer for WHIO (Channel 7) in Dayton, Ohio. I am not Frisbee, but I felt like one, my media credentials tossed back and forth from Oxford, Ohio, to Washington, D.C., and back again.

In the end, the security apparatus was ridiculously flawed. At the security checkpoint, no one even asked for my ID. The badge said I was Eric Frisbee, and I got in.

**'You are not allowed'**

I submitted my application for media credentials – including date of birth and social-security number – Sept. 20. An Oct. 12 e-mail from Miami University notified me of approval for the Dalai Lama's private morning session at Hall Auditorium. A staffer even let me in on a parking secret that prevented my having to walk or catch a shuttle across campus.

But three days later my credentials were revoked – and by a player I didn't even know was involved. Claire Wagner, director of Miami's News and Public Information Office, called *Streetvibes* and left a

phone message.

"I'm calling with bad news," she said. "We received an e-mail from the State Department, who is in charge of security for the day. We had supplied all of the personal information about the media. They have sent back a note saying you are not allowed to be in the venue that day. No details. I'm very sorry."

An essential part of Tibetan Buddhism is the notion of impermanence – everything changes. This was to prove true in this case.

I phoned Wagner to ask for clarification. I requested the e-mail from the State Depart-

ment and the name of the person who said I couldn't cover the Dalai Lama's visit. That person's name, it seems, is off-limits. Wagner sent this e-mail:

See Dalai, P. 6





By The Numbers

72

The percentage of residents of Section 8 housing assistance who are employed or retired (see page 5).

12

The tallest building, in number of stories, that Steven Paul Lansky can comfortably enter (see page 11).

11

The length, in number of years, of Liu Xiaobo's prison sentence in the People's Republic of China (see page 4).

1976

The year Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation was founded (see page 3).

2

The number of people initially barred by the U.S. State Department from a visit by the Dalai Lama (see page 1).

150

The size, in number of participants, of the Homeless Awareness March (see page 1).

1,000

The average distance, in miles, between farm field and U.S. grocery store (see page 6).

1930

The year in which *Get Low* is set (see page 10).

31

The number of NFL teams that don't seem to need problem players (see page 7).

10

The approximate number of police officers outside Music Hall during Sleeping Beauty (see page 10).

Streetwise

By Gregory Flannery  
Editor

Don't Tread on Other People

A conservative friend of mine has been critical of the Tea Party movement. “Anger,” he says, “is not a good organizing principle.”

My friend and I disagree on almost every political issue; but on this point, he is correct. He doesn’t mean there is no place for anger in politics but rather that a movement primarily fueled by anger is unlikely to advance. Shared ideas and principles are far more effective.

The Tea Party isn’t a movement at all, of course; it’s a mob. In the last few weeks of the 2010 election campaign I heard a radio commentator express concern that the Tea Party was beginning to resemble the brown-shirted thugs who stirred German rage to the point that the Nazi Party won office and ruled for 12 years. I thought the warning farfetched, and then came the attack last month on a woman at debate between candidates for a U.S. Senate seat in Kentucky.

Lauren Valle, an activist with the progressive movement MoveOn.org, tried to approach Republican candidate Rand Paul to give him a fake award for promoting the domination of GOP policies by big business. Paul’s supporters pulled a wig off Valle’s head and knocked her to the ground. In a horrifying scene played on video throughout the world, a campaign coordinator for Paul held her down by putting his foot on her neck.

The symbolism is perfect. Some Tea Party members have tried to paint Valle’s behavior as suspicious. Why was she wearing a wig? But their awareness of history is lacking. Participants in the original Boston Tea Party dressed as American Indians as they seized and destroyed crates of British tea. They didn’t, by the way, attack the crew of the ship.

Tea Party gatherings often fly the “Don’t Tread on Me” flag from the American Revolution. Tea Party activists seem perfectly willing, however, to tread on others. Fortunately, Valle wasn’t seriously injured, though she reported swelling in her face and soreness in her neck and shoulders.

As if the assault she suffered weren’t bad enough, the chief perpetrator, Tim Profitt, demanded an apology from Valle. In a local TV interview, Profitt said, “She’s a professional at what she does. When all the facts come out, people will see that she’s the one who initiated the whole thing.”

And there you have the Tea Party at its essence: Approaching one of its candidates at a public event in order to make a dissenting statement is perceived as an act of provocation, something to be stopped at the cost of violence.

Valle had sought to give Paul the Employee of the Month Award from RepubliCorp. – a make-believe group created by MoveOn.org in an act of political satire. The fact that the man who attacked Valle is named Profitt made the satire complete. The problem, of course, is that satire is lost on thugs.

The lasting damage from this kind of incident isn’t the minor injuries visited upon Lauren Valle but the damage inflicted on the body politic. Political violence is always and everywhere to be condemned. The Paul campaign fired Profitt – as it knew it must.

“The Paul for Senate campaign is extremely disappointed in and condemns the actions of a supporter last night outside the KET debate,” said a statement by Paul’s staff. “Whatever the perceived provocation, any level of aggression or violence is deplorable, and will not be tolerated by our campaign. The Paul campaign has disassociated itself from the volunteer who took part in this incident, and once again urges all activists – on both sides – to remember that their political passions should never manifest themselves in physical altercations of any kind.”

That’s rather craven, all in all. “Both sides” weren’t involved in violence. Paul’s side was. Even so, it’s better than the statement by the campaign for Jack Conway, Democratic candidate for the Senate: “We can disagree on issues, and I don’t know what preceded the incident, but physical violence by a man against a woman must never be tolerated.”

Agreed: Men shouldn’t assault women. Furthermore, women shouldn’t assault women. Nor should men assault men or women assault men. But Conway missed both the opportunity and the point.

What happened at that debate is a harbinger of things to come. Tensions have been unloosed in this country that, if not calmed, will lead to far greater violence. It is increasingly becoming acceptable to make scapegoats of minorities – undocumented workers and Muslims are especially in vogue as targets these days.

We must reclaim our ability to disagree without vilifying our opponents.

U.S. Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), in an act of glorious civic virtue, showed in 2008 what leadership is about in a republic. At a town hall meeting toward the end of McCain’s failed presidential campaign, a woman in the audience denounced then-Sen. Barack Obama as a Muslim – as if being one were some kind of ignominy. McCain took the microphone and firmly corrected the woman, his own supporter.

“No, ma’am,” he said. “You’re wrong.”

My conservative friend once told me that the chief value of democracy isn’t that it leads to the selection of the most qualified candidates or that it is the fairest way to govern. The chief value of democracy, he said, is that it provides a non-violent means for a change in power. He makes a good point. It’s important that we all remember that. Unbridled political passions are dangerous.

Streetvibes is an activist newspaper, advocating justice and building community. *Streetvibes* reports on economic issues, civil rights, the environment, the peace movement, spirituality and the struggle against homelessness and poverty. Distributed by people who are or once were homeless, in exchange for a \$1 donation, *Streetvibes* is published twice a month by the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless.

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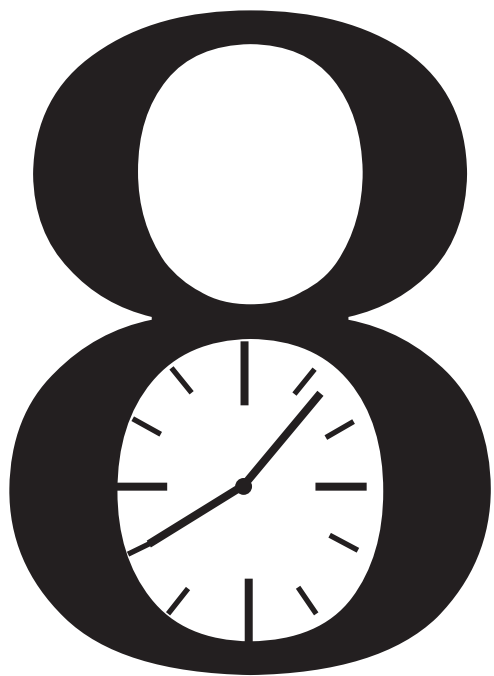
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**The Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless** is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that works to eradicate homelessness in Cincinnati through coordination of services, public education, grassroots advocacy and *Streetvibes*.





# MINUTES

## Considering Advocacy

By Margo Pierce  
*Contributing Writer*

Advocacy frequently gets a bad rap. Trying to get a specific idea, group of people or position heard above the barrage of information flooding our daily lives can appear to be “special treatment” and therefore dismissed as “biased.” This negative label appears to be applied most frequently when an idea, group or position doesn’t have popular support or challenges the currently accepted norm.

The problem is that people are fickle and often contradictory in their tastes, so the accepted standard frequently changes.

There are some long standing – some might say hard-core – beliefs in the United States that leave alternative perspectives fighting hard to be heard and seriously considered. The first that comes to mind is the value of human life.

Millions of dollars will be spent to rescue a few dozen people from a mine, a baby who fell down a well or people displaced by a tsunami. We invest a huge amount of money on having fire departments, hospitals, Coast Guard rescues and other emergency responses – available at a moment’s notice – even though the proportion of people served is small. A house fire might involve a few people; and even though car crashes occur every day, the number of people served per crash is usually that large. Why are these people considered worth the effort?

It doesn’t matter if the house on fire is a crack house and the people trapped inside are drug dealers – the fire department will respond. It doesn’t matter if human traffickers drive the overturned van on the freeway – law enforcement will still attempt to rescue the driver and the “cargo” of slaves. At the same time, we have a system of laws that punishes some people with the death penalty.

We spend an unimaginable amount of money to preserve life and yet we’ve created a system of laws that selectively destroys other lives. This dichotomy isn’t a simple one to unravel but the arbitrary way in which we value and devalue life is an excellent test case for the role of advocacy.

Some families who have lost a member as the result of murder – the people closest to the victims, the people who have the most legitimate argument for revenge – are trying to get the death penalty abolished. An argument could be made that they didn’t really care about the victim if they don’t seek revenge, but these families contend the opposite is true. It is because of their love for the life lost that they don’t want to see another life end. The act of forgiveness makes it possible for them to reinforce their belief that the life of their murdered child, parent, aunt or grandmother is valuable.

Murder Victims’ Families for Reconciliation (<http://www.mvfr.org/>) is an example of a minority voice trying to be heard and actively seeking to change a popular notion – state-sanctioned murder is OK, even necessary. Founded in 1976, Murder Victims’ Families for Reconciliation (MVFR) describes itself as “a national organization of family members of victims of both homicide and executions who oppose the death penalty in all cases. MVFR includes people of many different perspectives. Because violent crime cuts across a broad spectrum of society, our members are geographically, racially and economically diverse.”

Another groups that’s advocating for change is the Death Penalty Information Center ([www.deathpen-](http://www.deathpen-)



Editor Gregory Flannery presents Margo Pierce the *Streetvibes* Contributor of the Year Award. Bradley Foster.

altyinfo.org). This group sums up its argument with two simple sentences: “Vindication for victims and closure for victims’ families are often held out as primary reasons for supporting the death penalty. However, many people in this community believe that another killing would not bring closure and that the death penalty is a disservice to victims.”

In Cincinnati, the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center ([www.ijpc-cincinnati.org/](http://www.ijpc-cincinnati.org/)) is a long-standing advocacy group working to abolish the death penalty. The group lobbies elected officials, supports the families of people on Death Row through the Families That Matter program, coordinates a chapter of Ohioans to Stop Executions and leads Murder Victims’ Family Members, a program to help people “search for healing and a restored life.”

For 25 years the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center has served the role of bringing together like-minded people to combine efforts to change the conversation about the death penalty, to take a rational look at the effects of violence perpetrated by government against its own people.

It could be argued that their efforts and those of others advocating abolition aren’t very effective. According to the 2009 Gallup Crime Survey, conducted annually, 65 percent of Americans “support the use of the death penalty for persons convicted of murder,” and only 31 percent oppose the death penalty. These numbers have been fairly constant over time. Challenging such an ingrained notion appears to be an uphill effort for such a small number of people, so why bother?

Advocacy is a means by which people can bring to light ideas and opportunities for change that might never be considered in the rush to conform. It is through considering challenges to what is popular or assumed to be true that we can examine the validity of our position, behavior, thinking, etc. Being imperfect beings, we make mistakes but we have the ability to change our thinking, actions and laws.

Complacency is easy. It requires no effort. However, the act of thoughtfully considering an issue, researching it from as many angles as possible (there are always more than two sides to any argument, despite the polarization presented by most news programs), making a decision to act in support of that position and staying open to new information to test your position is the difficult role of advocacy.

The next time you dig in your heels and dismiss a view the conflicts with your own, pause long enough to consider how you would respond if your position were the minority and dismissed out of hand. You might not be tempted to pick up a picket sign or even write a check, but if you’re willing to consider alternatives, then the advocate you listened to accomplished something important – opening a mind.

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*Many people work hard to make a difference for the less privileged in the Queen City; “Eight Minutes” is an opportunity to learn who those people are and what motivates them to be a positive influence.*



# Nobel Prize for Chinese Freedom Fighter

## Liu Xiaobo and Charter 08 demand human rights

By **Andrew Anderson**  
Contributing Writer

**N**ews headlines were briefly alight a couple weeks ago about the recipients of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize, Liu Xiaobo and Charter 08.

To many Americans, it was nothing more than a curious item to be quickly forgotten. What interest does a Chinese dissident hold in our lives? His name is spelled funny – who would even try to pronounce it? Who has heard of Charter 08, and who cares?

President Barack Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009. We know that name and we celebrated and debated that announcement for weeks.

If our consciousness ever recorded the name of this year's Noble Peace Prize winner, the memory is quickly fading. This is unfortunate, for Liu Xiaobo and what he represents has arguably more significance to human rights and peace than President Obama.

"Liu Xiaobo" is three syllables: "LEE-OWE" (pronounced as one syllable) "SHE-OW" (pronounced as one syllable) "BO" (like "boy" with the "y" lopped off). Chinese names always have the family name or surname first, followed by the given name.

Liu is an intellectual, writer, literary critic and human-rights activist. He advocates democratic reforms and the end of one-party rule in China.

Until recently he was better known outside China than inside. The Chinese government considers his writing subversive, and his name is censored.

Born in 1955, he has a Ph.D. from Beijing Normal University, where he has also taught, and was a visiting scholar between 1988 and 1989 at Columbia University, the University of Oslo and the University of Hawaii, among others.

### A new constitution

Liu was visiting universities in the United States in 1989 when the Tiananmen Square protests erupted. He returned to China to join the movement and was later named one of the "Four junzis of Tiananmen Square" for persuad-

ing students to leave, saving hundreds of lives. ("Junzi" was a term coined by the Chinese philosopher Confucius to describe his ideal human.) Liu was imprisoned for over 18 months in maximum-security Qincheng Prison and released after signing a "letter of repentance" for his involvement in the Tiananmen Square protests.

Since 1989 Liu has been arrested four times and when not in prison has been under constant government "monitoring." This has included building a sentry station next to his home and tapping his phone calls and Internet communications.

Liu's wife, Xia, once complained to guards in the sentry station, who had blocked her best friend bringing two bottles of wine and a delivery person bringing a birthday cake for her husband. The guards said, "It is for the sake of your security. It has happened many bomb attacks in these days."

Liu Xiaobo has been arrested for his ideas and words. He has never been violent. He has not threatened to harm anyone or destroy any property. He has criticized the Chinese political system and advocated democracy. He was most recently arrested for helping write "Charter 08." He was sentenced to 11 years in prison and deprived of political rights for two years. He is serving that sentence in Jinzhou Prison in Liaoning Province.

Charter 08 is a manifesto promoting political reform and democratization in the People's Republic of China. It was written by "China Human Rights

Defenders," including Liu Xiaobo. Charter 08 espouses six fundamental principles: freedom, human rights, equality, republicanism, democracy and constitutional rule.

Charter 08 advocates fulfilling these principles by creating a new constitution that provides separation of power, legislative democracy, an independent judiciary, public control of public servants, the guarantee of human rights, election of public officials, rural-urban equality, freedom of association, freedom of assembly, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, civic education, protection of private property, financial and tax reform, social security, protection of the environment, a federated republic and truth in reconciliation.

The ideas in Charter 08 are not new. Charter 08 takes its name from Charter 77, a key document written by intellectuals and activists in the former Czechoslovakia and part

of the democracy movement led by Vaclav Havel in the late 1970s. Charter 08 draws on Charter 77 as well as the U.S. Constitution, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the Universal Declaration Human Rights of the United Nations, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Constitution of the People's Republic of China.

### 'Root out the organizers'

The China Human Rights Defenders started discussing and drafting Charter 08 in late spring 2008. Chinese authorities did not pay much attention at that time. Things quickly changed, however, days before the charter was published.

On Dec. 6, 2008, police in eastern China detained Wen Kejian, a writer who signed the charter, questioned him for about an hour. Police told Wen that Charter 08 was "different" from other dissident writings. They considered it "a fairly grave matter" and promised an aggressive investigation to "root out the organizers." They pressed Wen to remove his name from the charter. He declined, citing his belief that the charter was a turning point in history.

On Dec. 8, in the far south of China, police called Zhao Dagong, a writer who had signed the charter, for a "chat." They asked if he were the organizer for signatures gathered in southern China. At approximately 11 p.m. about 20 police officers entered the home of Zhang Zuhua, another of the charter's main drafters. Zhang was taken to the police station and questioned for over 12 hours.

Zhang's wife watched the police search their home, confiscate books, notebooks, Zhang's passport, all four of the family's computers and all their cash and credit cards. Later Zhang learned that his family's bank accounts, including those of both his and his wife's parents, had been emptied. Late that day, Liu Xiaobo was taken to jail.

The next morning one of the charter's signers, Pu Zhiqiang, a Beijing lawyer, was called in for a police "chat." In the evening, physicist and philosopher Jiang Qisheng was called into the police station. Both had signed the charter and were friends of its authors.

Charter 08 was published Dec. 10, 2008, the 60th anniversary of the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Police returned to Wen Kejian's home of and threatened him with imprisonment if he wrote about Charter 08 or Liu Xiaobo's arrest. They asked, "Do you want three years in prison – or four?"

Liu, detained in December 2008, was not formally arrested until June



**Liu Xiaobo is serving 11 years in prison for "subversion." Courtesy of Amnesty International.**

23, 2009. Police released a statement: "Liu has been engaged in agitation activities, such as spreading of rumors and defaming of the government, aimed at subversion of the state and overthrowing the socialism system, in recent years."

On Dec. 23, 2009, Liu was tried for two hours in a closed courtroom. His wife, Xia, was not allowed to be present, though his brother-in-law was. Diplomats from more than a dozen nations, including the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Sweden, Australia and New Zealand, were denied access and stood outside the courtroom waiting for the verdict.

Liu was sentenced on Christmas Day in hopes that Western democracies would be too preoccupied to care. The Chinese government convicted him of "subversion"; but as Liu said, "Opposition is not equivalent to subversion."

### 'This must change'

Dissidents asking for reform in China are nothing new. China's one-party political system of "democratic dictatorship" is one of the more repressive modern states. So why did Charter 08 have such a strong response from Chinese authorities?

While it is impossible to know for sure, there are a few things that make Charter 08 different:

- The language of the charter is simple and eloquent in its expression of noble ideas.
- It has broad appeal, coalescing what many Chinese have been thinking. It appeals equally to peasants and former party members and has been signed by Chinese citizens from all walks of life.
- Intellectuals within the society, not politicians or young radicals, are putting it forth.
- Internet use and infrastructure have grown enough within China that copies of Charter 08 are available and discussion about it is possible, though difficult due to censorship. The primary site hosting the charter and associated discussions was "attacked" via computer and shut down Oct. 14 and is still



**Liu was sentenced on Christmas Day in hopes that Western democracies would be too preoccupied to care."**

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# Meeting the Bible Verse Man

## Thinking about being homeless

By **Larry Gross**  
*Guest Columnist*

I'm in downtown Cincinnati on most mornings now, going to a freelance job in Northern Kentucky; and on most mornings, I see him while I'm waiting at the bus stop.

You can tell he's probably homeless; that's the way he appears to me. His black hair is uncombed, his white face badly in need of a shave and his clothes are basically rags.

His shoes used to be shoes. Now I'd consider them heavy, dirty socks. He doesn't smell good and his eyes look a little crazy – not mean, just a little off.

There is something else different about him, something that makes you take notice when you see him. Pinned to his rag of a shirt, with safety pins, are small index cards with handwritten

Bible verses on them. The verses are in black – I think with a marker – and he's wearing six to 10 of them on most mornings.

No, I don't read the Bible verses he has pinned to himself. I don't want him to think I'm paying attention to him. He approaches people for money, but so far not me.

Every time I see him – and I'm not sure why – my mind turns to myself. I wonder what my approach would be to being homeless and living on the street.

This man wears Bible verses pinned to himself. Others sit on corners with cardboard signs asking for help. Some simply have a paper cup, assuming you know they need money.

Some take it to the streets, preaching the word of God to anybody who will listen. A few sing to get a few coins. More than a few ask for a cigarette, perhaps to test the water before asking for money. Some offer *Streetvibes* for a donation of a dollar.

I don't know what my approach would be, but I think about being homeless more than I care to admit. Sometimes I look in my wallet on a Monday morning and see 20 bucks, realizing it's going to have to last me until Friday when

that freelance check should come in the mail. So often it doesn't.

Often I think to myself that family and friends would never let me live on the street but I take little comfort in that. Living off handouts doesn't appeal to me, especially from people I love. Maybe it's easier to ask strangers. Maybe someday I'll be forced to find out.

While I don't know how I could handle being homeless, all I know for sure is that I'd be scared, actually scared to death. I don't know if I could survive and don't know if I would want to. I don't know what would keep me strong and want to carry on.

Maybe the man with the Bible verses pinned to his shirt has found a way to find strength through them. Maybe for him it's important to write those verses. Maybe it's encouraging to wear them and think about their meaning. I mean, when you're homeless, few people are on your side. Perhaps to him, if no one else is in your corner, God is.

I'm thinking when he wears those Bible verses pinned to his shirt, it's probably comforting to look up at the heavens instead of looking down at a cold, lonely sidewalk.

## Those Darned Facts Trump Section 8 Myths

### The 'projects' aren't what you think

By **Michelle Dillingham**  
*Contributing Writer*

At my neighborhood's community council meeting last week I had the opportunity to provide some affordable-housing advocacy.

Our neighborhood police officer was updating the group about a multi-family property in our neighborhood that had been recently vacated and is now undergoing renovation. The officer reported there had been residents who had lived there for over 20 years, but recently a new group of younger renters had moved in and created problems. The building also suffered a bedbug infestation. The officer said there was a lot of "Section 8" there and now the landlord hopes to rent to "working families" instead.

When he finished, I addressed the group and said, "I noticed the officer made a distinction between 'Section 8' and 'working families,' yet many people who use Section 8 vouchers ARE working families. Sometimes there are problems, but they can be attributed to a number of factors. It is important to not just blame it on people who use Section 8. I just wanted to let everyone know that."

I got a nice nod from a couple of the residents and one of the firemen from the local firehouse. I felt pretty good about myself for a moment, then regretted that I did not have more solid numbers at the tip of my tongue to make my point more persuasive.

Fortunately, Elizabeth Brown, president of Affordable Housing Advocates (AHA), recently shared a link on the AHA Listserv to the U.S. Department of Housing (HUD) website, which includes detailed information on Housing Choice Voucher programs. If you go to this

link, you can view information on all of Ohio's public housing authorities all the way down to the project level. The information includes race, ethnicity, income and source of income, household size and length of stay.

The Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) is the largest landlord of affordable housing in Cincinnati. In fact, CMHA has such an important role in our local affordable-housing landscape that AHA has included it as one of the five areas of focus in its Policy Agenda for 2010. It is worthwhile to note AHA's specific advocacy goals in relation to CMHA, many of which are being actively worked on by AHA's members:

- CMHA will increase public and other affordable rental housing throughout Hamilton County, including increasing the number of accessible units to better meet the need.
- CMHA will fully utilize its current funds for the Housing Choice Voucher program, obtain additional funds from HUD, and assist program participants obtain housing in neighborhoods of their choice.
- CMHA will improve the effectiveness, efficiency and safety of the Housing Choice Voucher program to make it work better for tenants and landlords.
- CMHA will begin to redevelop the English Woods site with mixed-income rental and homeowner housing.
- CMHA will select an executive director committed to and capable of accomplishing CMHA's mission.
- Local Government appointing authorities will appoint CMHA board members who are dedicated to CMHA's mission.

There are many assumptions made about people who live in subsidized housing, and a data source such as the one HUD provides can help to bring some reality to the discussion of the Section 8 program and the site-based voucher users (i.e., "projects"). For example, you



can find out that in the Millvale housing project, 38 percent of the residents have been there less than one year, 32 percent of the residents work and 16 percent have Social Security or a pension.

Here are the usual negative comments I have heard about the CMHA program or about people who live in CMHA units, followed by data available on the HUD website:

- "There is too much Section 8" or "There are too many 'projects' in Cincinnati." Reality? CMHA manages a total of 4,628 units.
- "People who have Section 8 or live in projects don't work." Reality? 28 percent work and 44 percent receive Social Security or a pension – meaning they worked at one time, enough to earn credits to be able to receive Social Security or a pension.
- "The people who live in CMHA housing are just lazy young people with too many kids." Reality? Fourteen percent are elderly, and 21 percent are disabled. A full 47 percent of CMHA units have a

single occupant, meaning they have no children. Another 22 percent of all units have only two household members. This means 69 percent of CMHA households have two or fewer members in their household.

- "Once someone moves into CMHA, they never move out." Reality? 43 percent of households have lived in a CMHA unit for less than two years, while 22 percent have lived in a CMHA unit for two to five years.

The main staple of effective advocacy is accurate data to help combat stereotypes and misinformation. I encourage housing advocates to utilize this information as you sit in your community council meetings, work lunches and even at the kitchen table. Knowledge is power.

For more information, visit <https://pic.hud.gov/pic/RCRPublic/rcrmain.asp>. To join AHA or its listserv, write [mdmswlswh@hotmail.com](mailto:mdmswlswh@hotmail.com).



# Eat Your Food Where it's Grown

## The value of buying local

By Sarah Robinson  
Contributing Writer

There has been some considerable buzz the past few years about “local food movements” and “buy local” campaigns. The First Lady has an organic garden, Michael Pollan has appeared on Oprah and you might have seen some “Ohio Proud” stickers at the grocery store.

Why is this important?

Buying local means reduced petroleum consumption. The

food you buy at the grocery store, on average, travels 1,000 miles from where it is produced and processed to where it shows up on the shelf. All that transportation, not to mention refrigeration, has contributed to the food system's accounting for one-fifth of total energy use in America.

Buying local is good for your neighborhood's economy. Money spent on local products at locally owned businesses is re-circulated into the community. Local farmers tend to hire local workers and to buy most of their supplies and equipment at other local businesses, so what is spent in

your town stays in your town.

Buying local means that your produce is more likely to be picked when it is fresh – especially if you go to your local farmers market – which means it is more nutritious and better for you. Produce is often fragile when ripe and is susceptible to bruising and rotting, which makes 1,000-mile road trips very difficult. Fruits and vegetables are picked before they are ripe and then sprayed with ethylene, a chemical that forces ripening, so, for example, that road-weary tomato is nice and red when you go to buy it.

Buying local means farmers can grow more diverse crops.

Road-trip produce is picked for its ease of transport and its appearance, not its genetic diversity, nutrition or taste. Because of the prevalence of this kind of produce in our markets, the seeds of thousands of different kinds of individual vegetables and fruits have been lost. Farmers can only grow a select few species, hybridized, genetically modified and selectively bred to withstand the transport.

Buying local is not just for produce. It can impact everything you eat, even your cereal and potato chips. They not only have been shipped a thousand miles after being processed, but all

the individual ingredients that make up that box of cereal or that bag of chips have to get to the factory first. That can add another couple hundred or thousand miles, considering how many ingredients make up the final product.

These factors are not going unnoticed by people all over this country. When food is bought locally, it has a positive impact on the whole community. The environment, the food itself, the economy and most of all people themselves all benefit.

## Dalai Continued from page 1

“I did ask the State Dept. if I could forward contact info. to you and they declined. This is the short e-mail I first got: ‘The criminal history checks revealed the two following people will NOT be allowed to access any venue:

“(One other name)

“Greg Flannery (Media/Press List).’ ”

This was partly useful. I now knew that I wasn't alone: Someone else had also been denied entry.

I phoned Wagner again. She told me only that the second person is “not a media person.”

“I hope you understand I'm just the conduit on this,” she said.

*Streetvibes* has filed a public-records request for the uncensored e-mail, containing both the name of the second person who was banned and the name of the State Department official who sent it.

With less than a week before the Dalai Lama's appearance, I called Wagner to ask if *Streetvibes* could send a different writer. The answer was no.

“The State Dept. deadline will not allow any changes/additions of media,” she wrote.

Getting nowhere with Miami University, I called the U.S. State Department. I reached James J. Finkle, public affairs officer for the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, on Mon., Oct. 18. He promised to look into it.

This yielded some improvement. Wagner left a phone message later that day.

“I just got off the phone with the State Department,” she said. “They're willing to take another reporter for *Streetvibes*.”

### ‘Are you going to demonstrate?’

Still unresolved, of course, was the reason behind all this: Why did the Diplomatic Security Bureau of the U.S. State Department want me kept away from the Dalai Lama? In 2009 I wrote an article in which some Buddhists criticized him for violating other Buddhists' freedom of religion (see “Rejoicing Against Oppression,” issue of Sept. 15-30, 2009). Could that be it? My only criminal conviction is for trespassing, the result of a non-violent anti-war demonstration in 2006. Could that be it? A call Tuesday, Oct. 19, from Special Agent Ken Jones seemed to leave both possibilities open.

“Have you ever had any police trouble?” Jones asked.

I told him about my trespassing conviction.

“Are you going to demonstrate against the Dalai Lama?” he asked.

“No,” I said. “I just want to report on his speech.”

“Demonstrations are fine, but a press pass isn't the best way to go about that,” he said.

“I just want to report on the Dalai Lama's speech,” I said.

“As far as demonstrations go, we're ordinarily not in the business of discouraging them, but a press pass would put someone much closer to the Dalai Lama, and you can understand why a security person would be concerned,” Jones said.

“I just want to report on the Dalai Lama's speech,” I said.

Jones then asked if *Streetvibes* could send another reporter. I told him we could.

“Someone will get back to you soon,” he said.

I asked the reason I had been banned.

“I don't know the specifics of that, and very frankly, if I did, I would probably not be allowed to tell you that,” Jones said.

I don't know what changed the State Department's mind, but that night I received a phone message and e-mail from Wagner. She forwarded the following e-mail from the State Department: “Claire, Headquarters has approved Mr. Flannery for a media press pass for Wednesday's events. Please contact him to let him know.”

Thus I reported, as instructed, at 8

a.m. Thursday, Oct. 21, to attend the private session with the 14th Dalai Lama, at Hall Auditorium at Miami University. I was told to arrive 90 minutes early for the 9:30 a.m. session in order to pass security. Police officers were everywhere in sight. So was a metal detector.

When it came time to enter, there was no press badge for me. One of Wagner's staff handed me a badge and said, “Here. You're Eric Frisbee.”

And that's how I got in.

You'll want to know what the Dalai Lama had to say, and I wish I could tell you. After the president of the university presented an honorary doctorate of laws, the chief of the Miami Tribe in Oklahoma spoke, followed by a chorus singing the tribe's welcome song, followed by a presentation by three professors touting the university's efforts to preserve Tibetan culture, including a digital sand mandala, a Web page teaching the Tibetan language and a Web page containing important Tibetan texts. At that point I had to leave in order to hurry to a noon meeting in Cincinnati. But I heard the Dalai Lama say this much: “Have a compassionate attitude – openness.”

I'm trying. Openness remains the issue. I'm still waiting for Miami University to comply with our public-records request.

## Nobel Continued from page 3

down as of this writing.

Liu and Charter 08 have become symbols of the struggle for a more humane and democratic China. The authorities quickly recognized this and acted to squelch the movement. In doing so, they ironically made sure the cry was heard.

The Nobel Committee made the world at large aware of Liu Xiaobo and Charter 08 this year. The committee stated, “(We have) decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2010 to Liu Xiaobo for his long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China. The Norwegian Nobel Committee has long believed that there is a close

connection between human rights and peace. Such rights are a prerequisite for the ‘fraternity between nations’ of which Alfred Nobel wrote in his will.”

We should not quickly forget Liu Xiaobo and Charter 08. They represent a move toward a freer and more humane life for the nation with the largest population on earth. They need our help to succeed.

Liu Xiaobo and the authors of Charter 08 summarize the situation this way: “Unfortunately, we stand today as the only country among the major nations that remains mired in authoritarian politics. Our political system continues to produce human-rights

disasters and social crises, thereby not only constricting China's own development but also limiting the progress of all of human civilization. This must change, truly it must. The democratization of Chinese politics can be put off no longer.”

.....

To view the full text of Charter 08, sign a copy of the charter and learn more about Liu Xiaobo and the human rights movement in China, visit [www.charter08.com](http://www.charter08.com).

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# The Death Watch is All the Bengals Have

Mike Brown has to go at some point

By B. Clifton Burke  
Contributing Writer

My optimism has faded, my apologies run dry, my hopes dashed. What was once a blooming plant of excitement and pride is now wilted, browned and angrily tossed near the compost heap. I would set it atop the rest of the rotting vegetation, but following after it simply isn't worth the effort.

In his recent press conference, Marvin Lewis has once more invoked the spirit of the metaphorical shovel – the layman's tool that represents a hardworking and unglamorous lifestyle for his players – but the only thing I can imagine worth using a shovel for these days is to fling out the bullshit stacked in and around Paul Brown Stadium. After carelessly handing away the game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers Oct. 10, there is no more defense for the various tiers of helpless leadership within the Bengals organization.

At the very top sits the head villain himself, Mike Brown. Here is a man who has made it clear he is unwavering in the way he runs his business even as it persists to perform in unremarkable fashion. He has also proven he cares little about Cincinnati and eagerly awaits the day that he can once more threaten the townspeople into paying him even more of their tax money. He hides behind a shroud of redemption, pointing to the careers he's resuscitated as feel-good tales of second chances and marginal wins.

In reality, the people he has helped come at bargain prices, and that is the real motivation behind all the signings of troubled young men. When it works – and admittedly it has in many cases – he is touted as some kind of humanitarian, but what is conveniently overlooked is that 31 other teams need not stoop to problem children in order to win.

There will come a day when I can no longer root for a Mike Brown team with a good conscience, knowing how unjustly he has served the city in which I reside. I expect that day to present itself once the current stadium lease ends or Brown sues Hamilton County for not paying him the promised money it simply doesn't have. He will not back down because he simply doesn't care. He is out for himself.

Subhead: Short satisfaction

Next in the pecking order is the team's president and general manager. Oh, wait, there isn't one. This unorthodox approach saves Brown money and allows his ego to think he has lived up to the standard of his father, who was able to successfully work as both team owner and general manager simultaneously. If there's one

thing Brown seems unable to grasp, it is that he does not have his father's football instinct; and this delusion has kept the team from being serious contenders. One can only hope that that number is soon coming to an end.

Somewhere in the flowchart is his daughter and her husband, Katie and Troy Blackburn, who hammer out details over contracts with player agents and end up either missing out on high-profile free agents (Warren Sapp) or prolonging rookie holdouts (seemingly everyone except Carson Palmer). The value of both of their positions remains something of a mystery, and the likelihood of this tandem turning around the team for the better once Brown finally dies seems overly optimistic. The fact that they are younger is the only hope for a brighter Bengals future, but considering the family lineage, sometimes you just have to call a scrooge a scrooge.

Next up is a person with some football sense, Coach Marvin Lewis. During the Mike Brown era, there have been two distinct time periods: before Marvin and after Marvin. There's no point on rehashing the dark ages of Dave Shula, Bruce Coslet and Dick LeBeau. But since Marvin has been in Cincinnati, the Bengals have gone from inept to competitive. That alone is a feat when examining the misery that came before him.

That feat has a fairly quick expiration of satisfaction. Once fans see a team become competitive, they want more right away, and that is what Lewis has struggled to attain. Marvin has a good eye for talent and runs a pretty sound operation. He knows what an NFL team should look like, and most of his men seem to buy into it as well. However, the man is an inadequate game manager on the sidelines and doesn't seem to have the ability to instruct players well enough individually to produce much of an improvement in their development.

Once a player joins the Bengals, he typically remains that kind of player until he leaves the team. They rarely get worse, but they also don't get better.

Putting Marvin upstairs next to Brown and making him a general manager makes sense, but I don't think that will happen. Lewis wants more personnel decision-making power and an indoor practice facility; that would mean Brown would have to concede some of his ego and more of his money. I think this might be the last of Marvin Lewis in this town once the 2010 season wraps up, and that's a shame.

Subhead: Continuing sting  
Who's next then? Most Bengal fans point to Mike Zimmer. Not only is Zim

## BENGALS SCHEDULE

\* Monday, Nov. 8, 2010, 8:30 p.m.  
vs Pittsburgh Steelers

\* Sunday, Nov. 14, 2010, 1 p.m.  
at Indianapolis Colts

\* Sun, Nov. 21 at 1 p.m.  
vs Buffalo Bills

\* Thursday, Nov. 25, 2010, 8:20 p.m.  
at New York Jets at Jets

\* Sunday, Dec. 5, 2010, 1 p.m.  
vs New Orleans Saints

\* Sunday, Dec. 12, 2010, 1 p.m.  
at Pittsburgh Steelers at Steelers

\* Sunday, Dec. 19, 2010, 1 p.m.  
vs Cleveland Browns

\* Sunday, Dec. 26, 2010, 8:20 p.m.  
vs San Diego Chargers

\* Sunday, Jan. 02, 2011, 1 p.m.  
at Baltimore Ravens

a fan favorite, thanks to his turning around a bad defense in a short time and persevering through the unexpected death of his wife last year; he also has the undying loyalty of his men. That isn't as pervasive a sentiment in the NFL as maybe it should be these days. With mediocre players performing for him at overachieving levels, it makes sense that fans would want that to translate into the whole team. The problem, though, is that it would mean removing Zimmer from what he's best at – coaching defense. Let's not forget the examples of LeBeau and even Marvin, making a great coordinator into a poor or average head coach.

With today's game, the head coach can be more of an overseeing cheerleader who manages the game and the clock well and need not worry about the X's and O's as much – that's what coordinators are for. Of course, it isn't that simple, but not every great position coach makes a good head coach, so caution is in order.

The longest-standing figurehead with the Bengals is the offensive coordinator, Bob Bratkowski, who, after the evil emperor himself, has earned the title of least-liked sports figure in Cincinnati. Between squandering loads of offensive talent and constant bewildered play-calling, Brat should be thankful he coaches here, because in every other part of the world he would have been fired. In the loss to the Buccaneers, and even some of the wins this year, he has demonstrated further ineptitude in leading this offense to the heights it's capable of. Bashing this man has become too easy, but somehow he keeps it from happening nearly each and every week.

His star pupil and gem of a talent for the past eight seasons has been

the golden boy, Quarterback Carson Palmer. Despite convincing the world otherwise thanks to one great season, Palmer should be labeled as nothing more than average. The comparisons to Drew Bledsoe continue to hold up. Carson has been insulated with numerous excuses as to why he hasn't performed the way he did in 2005. It seems that the majority of the world would rather find any other reason than to admit that maybe he just isn't that good. Yes, he has suffered some injuries, but other great quarterbacks have as well, only to return as greats. Yes, he at times has lacked explosive weapons, but the same response goes for the great ones again. There aren't better quarterbacks on the street right now that should supplant No. 9 this week or even this season; but if this franchise continues to pretend he is as good as it gets, they will fall further and further behind. Perhaps he has become complacent with no quarterback to compete for his job, perhaps he feels his average play still justifies his immense contract; but the fact is he has slid each and every year away from that once heralded "elite" plateau. Thinking there is still room for improvement in his skills is naïve.

I want the Bengals to succeed. I want to know what it feels like to have my team win the Super Bowl. I want to feel satisfied for six whole months; but with these men currently in their places, I am dubious that will ever happen. This franchise has reached its critical mass, and unless a major change in the power structure takes place, I think we will continue to feel the sting.

I can feel it all slipping away. Mojokong – somebody's got to say it, and since I don't get paid for this, allow me to be the one.



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**March** Continued from page 1

stealing, low-income affordable housing and people power,” said Josh Spring, executive director of the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless. “We want more than just awareness. We demand change. This march gives the opportunity to demand change and others the opportunity to learn why we need change.”

Burton, who was homeless, died after a police cruiser ran over her as she lay in the grass in Washington Park. No charges were filed against the officer who killed her.

Each night in Cincinnati 1,200 to 1,500 people are homeless or staying in emergency shelters, according to Spring, who estimates that at least 25,000 sleep in homeless shelters in Cincinnati every year.

The 150 marchers included low-income families, high-income families, suburban residents, Over-the-Rhine residents, college students, disabled young adults, able-bodied elders and people from several ethnic backgrounds. Handmade signs, T-shirts and sheets carried messages such as, “Stop the war on the poor,” “End the 3CDC occupation,” “Living wage jobs,” “Gentrification is a crime,” “Homes not hotels” and “I’m homeless. If I sleep on the grass, will you kill me, too?”

Rebecca Davis, who works at the temporary service CFA, brought her daughter and granddaughter to the march.

“I’m not homeless, but I’m like one paycheck away from being homeless,” she said. “I’m marching today because I believe that homeless people don’t have a chance. I don’t want my daughter or granddaughter to grow up and be homeless. It’s that I actually see the homeless people sleeping outside. I wake up at 3:30 in the morning, the bus picks me up and people are just sleeping outside at the Shell station.”

**‘Whatever you can do’**

Buddy’s Place, the starting line, provides permanent supportive housing for 20 people who are coming out of homelessness. The second stop was 1428 Republic St., an apartment building offering affordable housing, where tenants recently received notice to move out for the building’s renovation. Ironically, this building is across the street from the fu-



**Josh Spring, executive director of the Greater Cincinnati Coalition for the Homeless, addresses a rally before the Homeless Awareness March. Vinit Murthy.**

ture Gateway Quarter office. Gateway Quarter is the new name for the “revitalized” parts of Over-the-Rhine, the Fountain Square District and the central business district that feature new or renovated storefronts, condos or lofts.

Spectators and passersby reacted to the march with cheers, claps and whistles. Shop owners went onto the sidewalks to shout words of encouragement.

The third stop, the future 3CDC headquarters at 1400 Race St., brought attention to the company that many believe is behind the gentrification of Over-the-Rhine.

The fourth stop on the march, Washington Park, might just be the most affordable “housing” in the city. With shady trees and benches aplenty, the park is a common place for homeless people to socialize and sleep. 3CDC is renovating the park at a cost of \$47 million. The overhaul disregards the wishes of the neighborhood and will make the park inhospitable to homeless people, according to the Homeless Coalition.

Clark, a homeless man who declined to give his last name, sat on the steps of the gazebo, which was being used as a makeshift clothes line, and watched the marchers move through the park. He declined to go into detail about the cause of his homelessness.

“I’ve been homeless for about 16 years now,” he said. “The only history I got is a criminal history. Why

are these people acting like homelessness has just become an issue? The same thing they’re fighting for now we fought for 16 years ago, but now that they’re moving people out of the park and Over-the-Rhine, it’s like it’s only just become important now. ...

“To get by, some people cell cigs for a quarter. There are only two ways of getting paid in this world: the legal way and the illegal way, but Washington Park is still harmony; it’s the only place in the city you can come that won’t make you feel bad for having nothing. You steal, rob, whatever you can do to survive or make a livin’.”

Other stops included the Drop Inn Center; the former site of the Milner Hotel, 151 W. Seventh St., an affordable housing complex that once provided overflow for public shelters, now the location of upscale condos; and the Dennison Hotel, which has 150 units of single-room occupancy. Model Management, which recently purchased the building, plans to remove all the tenants and convert the building into 60 units of permanent supportive housing. That kind of housing is beneficial, but 90 units of affordable housing will be lost, Spring said. Why couldn’t Model Management develop these 60 units in one of the many buildings already vacant downtown?

The march then proceeded to the Metropole Apartments, notable for two reasons. 3CDC has purchased the Metropole and is forcing out residents of the federally subsidized apartments in order to build a boutique hotel (see “3CDC Accused of Racial Conspiracy,” issue of Sept. 1-14). In addition, just steps from the Metropole entrance, Robert Meehan was beaten so badly that doctors had to place him in

a medically induced coma – one of a series of hate crimes against homeless people in Cincinnati in the past year.

**‘All I got’**

As the march moved toward Fountain Square, reactions from onlookers changed from cheers to stares. Outdoor diners were curious about the approaching mass, and stood up to read the signs. At Cadillac Ranch, a man read the signs aloud to a young boy, who asked what was going on.

Organizers of the march hoped their actions might provoke a reaction from 3CDC, Gateway Quarter and other downtown interests, but they seemed to ignore the event, unresponsive to the demonstration and phone calls.

At Fountain Square, Spring asked for volunteers to distribute copies of *Streetvibes*, risking arrest in an act of non-violent civil disobedience. A city ordinance and rules established by 3CDC, which has the management contract for Fountain Square, forbid regular distribution of the newspaper there.

About three dozen volunteers distributed copies of *Streetvibes*. No police officers or 3CDC security personnel were on the square, even

though – or because – 3CDC had been informed of the plan in advance.

“We intend to continue challenging the unjust laws and rules that prevent our vendors from distributing *Streetvibes* on Fountain Square,” said Gregory Flannery, editor of the paper and a participant in the march.

The only people who seemed to mind the stunt on Fountain Square were a wedding party that arrived at the same time for photos. Kenny Bussell said he hopes this is the first step in eliminating the ban.

Bussell now stays at his brother’s house. He became a *Streetvibes* vendor about a year ago, when he was homeless.

“It helps me every day, gives me a few bucks so I don’t have to ask for something to eat,” he said.

Bussell, who turned 50 on Oct. 25, distributes *Streetvibes* for four to five hours a day. From 8-10 a.m. he is usually be spotted outside the Kenton County Courthouse in Covington, then stands by the Walgreens store on Madison Avenue for a couple hours. He rode his bike throughout the march.

“I try to take care of myself on my own, without friends or family,” Bussell said. “I raise tomatoes, and they are \$2 a pound. My tomatoes ran out about three weeks ago, and people even started stealing them, so *Streetvibes* is really all I got right now.”

3CDC, Model Management and the people behind Gateway Quarter do have imaginative ideas to bring money to downtown, and they create beautiful structures. But should a city reflect what one company wants?

What type of people will make up the “new” downtown? Clark, the homeless man in the park, thinks he knows.

“The future people of downtown are the ones with money,” he said. “You got to have money. The schools, buildings, shops – all that stuff is multi-million dollar things in the works. You gotta have money in the park now.”

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# The Dance of Class Consciousness

## ‘Sleeping Beauty’ in the hood

By **Lea Ottenheimer**  
Contributing Writer

In 2004 I became hooked on a reality show, like so many others in the United States. I felt a certain amount of guilt about buying in to the American craze for this genre, but I think that this show, *So You Think You Can Dance*, had a redeeming quality that the other reality shows did not: it made experiencing the art form of dance something the general public could enjoy.

Now, there are many people who seek out dance performances who would not have done so before the show aired. I am one of those people. Unfortunately, tickets to most dance performances remain out of my financial range, especially tickets to the ballet.

I can honestly say that I didn't think I liked ballet before I watched my first pas de deux on the show, but because *So You Think You Can Dance* sparked my interest in this classic art form, I decided to seek out local dance performances to attend. I attended my very first ballet Oct. 23. It was *Sleeping Beauty*, performed by the Cincinnati Ballet Company.

As I had so little experience going to the ballet, I brought a friend who had been to a number of performances so I could compare my observations to the performances she has seen. It was my friend, Jen, who had first introduced me to *So You Think You Can Dance*, so as a fellow dance lover, she seemed the perfect choice for my evening's companion.

The performance was at Cincinnati's Music Hall, a massive and ornate 19th-century building which is across an old cobbled street from Washington Park, which the city is attempting

to reclaim from the Over-the-Rhine residents for the type of people with whom I would be watching the ballet – those who can afford tickets to performances at Music Hall. Music Hall still sits in the center of what many would term a “ghetto.”

Jen and I walked two blocks through Over-the-Rhine from a parking meter on Central Avenue to Music Hall. It was a warm, dry night, and many people were out sitting outside on stoops. I felt I had been transported to Dickens's London, where the wealthy picked their way through dirty streets and dirty faces, trying to pretend not to see any of it, as they headed for a type of entertainment those around them could never afford to enjoy. Even my friend clutched my arm and stuck close to me, afraid of all the scary poor people we were walking past. Much to her relief, we made it to the upper-class sanctuary without loss of life and limb, and she hurried up the steps with me following more slowly and painfully as I had borrowed a pair of high-heeled shoes so I could try and look like I belonged to the group of people who frequent Music Hall.

I've learned from experience how hard it is to remain an incognito observer at an upper-class function when wearing sneakers or combat boots.

We had very good seats, right up close to the stage in the second row, and I had every expectation of being swept away by the performance – like Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman*, when Richard Gere takes her to the opera for the first time. Of course, since reality always ends up being different from fantasy, I wasn't swept away, though I did enjoy the performance. It's slightly embarrassing, but I found myself fighting to stay awake a couple times. I think the problem was that I love stories; and in a ballet, much of the performance has very little to do with the progression of the narrative.

In the last act, the wedding scene,

where we were promised a pas de deux from Sleeping Beauty and her prince, I was very much surprised by four of the wedding guests. First a pair of cats, a female dancer dressed as a white Persian and a male dancer dressed as a cat I can only assume was meant to be Puss in Boots, danced a very funny routine that made everyone laugh. Then Little Red Riding Hood was chased around the stage by her Big Bad Wolf. When I asked Jen what she thought about the other fairy tale character's crashing Sleeping Beauty's wedding, she said, “Well they had to figure out something to fill up the fourth act since the wedding scene took only five minutes.” I thought that was very fine reasoning.

The other thing that puzzled me was that, after a dancer or couple or group of dancers finished their solo or dance, the audience would clap and the dancer/dancers would bow to the audience. They would sometimes even go off the stage and then come back on just to take their bows. Jen told me she hadn't seen that in other ballets and was also puzzled by it. However, the audience seemed to know when they were supposed to applaud. Some even applauded after particularly brilliant or astounding dance moves. Every now and then it made me think I was at a tennis match.

The performance as a whole was really wonderful. The skill level of those dancers, especially Sleeping Beauty and her Prince, was astonishing. I was blown away by what those dancers could do; and it is much to their credit that I paid more attention to what was happening on stage than to the type of people who made up the audience, which is where my interest usually lies at this type of function.

Much to my surprise, after all the pains and care I took putting together my ensemble for the evening, there were a few people in the audience not dressed up. There were even a

few faces of color present, though all belonged to well-dressed people. Of those few wearing jeans, I supposed that there were some who felt secure about their wealth and status and so felt free to show up looking however they wanted, while those of us who felt less secure, or who knew just how out of place we were, made much more of an effort to appear as though we belonged.

I am glad I was inspired to seek out a local dance performance and do my part to show support for the art form. However, the experience as a whole only served to remind me of the class war going on downtown. Jen and I went out to smoke a cigarette during intermission with many other audience members, and I felt utterly ridiculous standing on the steps in my borrowed feathers watching fellow members of the audience look out nervously past the 10 or so police officers providing an armed guard to the shadowy figures moving around in the park across the street or sitting on the stoops down the block. I was amazed that the Cincinnati Police Department could spare so many officers to stand in front of Music Hall for four hours to make sure no “unsavory characters” got too close. It made me wonder if they would even have allowed me to ascend the stairs if I were wearing my usual street clothes.

As much as I enjoyed the performance of the Cincinnati Ballet Company, I don't think I'll be attending another ballet any time soon, at least in this city. There are quite a few people, I know, who can enjoy themselves even if their enjoyment is bought at the cost of the comfort and liberty of others. The British Empire was forged by just such people, as were the Roman and Greek empires before that. I, however, am not one of those types of people, and I'm OK with that.



## When the Crazy Old Man Talks

### See ‘Get Low’ for the acting

By **Brian O'Donnell**  
Contributing Writer

With a cast of headliners, *Get Low* relies on the shine of its star power to move an otherwise sluggish tale.

Set in the 193's during the Great Depression, *Get Low* is the story of a hermit viewed by his town as a cantankerous curmudgeon. It seems everyone in this town has a story to tell about Robert Duvall's character; the gossip from town-folk paints a picture of him that matches his grizzled visage.

Part comedy, part mystery and part drama, a folk-tale story is driven by its cast, who convincingly guide the audience through the ethereal events that create Duvall's character, the infamous Felix Bush.

A lifelong resident of a town who knows him not as the handsome and eccentric youth he

once was, but as the local weirdo incessantly harassed by neighborhood children, Duvall leads the cast in a performance as good as any of the roles that made him a legend.

Waiting to die, guilt-ridden and alone, Duvall's Bush plans what he terms a “funeral party” that he can attend while still living. This prospect pushes him from his self-imposed imprisonment back into the lives of the townspeople, who fear him for the numerous tall tales spread about him, the same yarns he wants retold at his party.

The strengths of *Get Low* aren't in the story of this hermit and his funeral party, but in the power of its ensemble cast, including Bill Murray and Sissy Spacek. Solid performances by everyone involved keep the plot fresh.

Duvall's character enlists the help of Frank Quinn, a shady funeral-home director played by Murray, who is convincing rather than distracting. With liquor almost always in hand, Murray's character is responsible for creating the funeral party. Through

his lighthearted performance as an untrustworthy mortician with myriad past careers, the story of Felix Bush slowly unravels, with Spacek a central part of his tumultuous past.

Despite the slowness of the story, the film is strong in the talents of its actors who bring life to an otherwise short-lived premise. Perfectly cast, subtle characteristics bring the story's players out of myth into the realm of the very real.

From Duvall's labored breathing throughout as a frail old man to Spacek's gentle sentimentalism as the one person who remembers Bush as a charming enigma, *Get Low* is a period piece about forgiveness and community catharsis that ultimately allows for a peaceful resolution.

Don't expect an intense storyline relying on Murray to soothe the tension. Well-developed characters drive an otherwise short story. The actors' flawless execution easily holds a high spot on a list of best performances for everyone involved.



# Into Steady Meditations

By Steven Paul Lansky

They woke me early. I washed my bearded face in the tile bathroom and dressed in my light yellow button-down shirt, black gabardines, and slipped on the beige linen and silk jacket. I had my last look at this faded, light-green-walled dormitory with its gritty tile floor. I followed the final instructions, received my meds (still on Geodon), my wallet with credit cards, business cards and IDs, my cash in the money clip, the extra cash they had given me for the trip and the train ticket. The whole place seemed familiar. A flash of memory that was eerie as all hell swept through me. Every time I had been asked during treatment if I had “been here” before, I had a sense that I was lying when I said, “No.” I think a part of me believed they would catch me in this lie, as they had records, but they never let on. It was a question that always came in a series of questions, and the answers never led to any concrete conclusion on my part, except for the sure knowledge that while I was being questioned the questioner was always, each and every time, weighing the length of my stay and the state of my recovery.

The drug and alcohol counselor had been the least helpful. He had light brown hair that looked unwashed, tattoos on both forearms, looked like he might have had a facelift, and talked in an uneducated drawl. I told him I was clean and sober over 12 years, and I missed my local meetings. He told me that I was too well to attend meetings on the ward. The only treatment available was for current users, who were required to go to a six-month residential program. He could not recommend that for me. I think I made a mistake when I asked if he was a veteran. He was. I wonder if there was something in my file about my aversion to the military.

So, that last morning I was sure that my release was planned but could be aborted if I showed signs of abnormality. I got my breakfast on the fly. Two staff that I had never seen before took me to a van. I had my pack and the acid burn of the stolen green cotton button-down shirt. My hairbrush had broken and been replaced with a better one. (The staff member who had procured the plastic replacement referred to it as a Cadillac, a typical slang for the best of its class.) But the shirt was a total loss. I recalled bitter moments when one staff helped search the ward, looking in fellow patients’ hampers and wardrobes

for the J. Peterman, forest green, button-down shirt. We searched without accusing anyone, an awkward exercise, but no one took visible affront; I suspected a young fellow who wore a makeshift turban he’d crafted by tearing a pillowcase. He often used the bathroom next to my room even though he lived in another room that had its own bathroom. He was bearded, thin and often practiced some awkward martial arts in the outdoor smoking area, flailing his arms and legs like a gigantic, dizzy, daddy long-legs. This thin man also was Arabic and was a regular target of derision from the other patients and the male staff. He had been in one fistfight. We never recovered the stolen shirt. As the van sped through the morning streets, I opened the envelopes with aftercare instructions and my discharge plan. I scarfed a bagel and drank a juice after peeling back the foil seal. I watched out the windows trying to figure out where I had been.

We arrived at the train station. All I ever saw of Trenton, New Jersey, was the train station and the interior of the Drake facility where I had been held. I figured out which ticket and which train I needed without help from the staff. They would have screwed it up, from the advice they gave. The two of them didn’t spend much time on me, preferring to talk to one another. Both were black, the woman was heavy-set and spoke in a British accent. They seemed impressed that I could read the schedule and knew that I couldn’t get on the first Washington, D.C., train, because it was an express commuter train. Then I said goodbye to them and walked onto Amtrak, a free man.

I felt my body change; I walked freely, a new bounce in my gait. I had a time finding an empty seat, eventually sitting next to a young woman. I pulled out *Alias Grace* by Margaret Atwood and began to read. The book was on my reading list and I harbored thoughts of meeting the author in Toronto later in the summer. Miami University, where I was finishing my MA, had included this text in the first-year curriculum, so I hoped to teach it to undergraduates in the fall. Given my interest in creativity and primary sources, as I read I realized that in the 1970s I had cycled on my 10-speed through the very region where the book was set. I had a pencil

in hand and noted in the margins where the story most piqued my imagination. One of the psychiatrist’s techniques for opening up the dialogue with the alleged murderess in the novel was to give her a piece of fruit or a vegetable to hold while he questioned her. In one instance he shared an apple, in another a yam. I wondered as I read about the relative sizes of the produce and then began to think about the size of the character’s hands.

My brother lives in Vermont and he is knowledgeable about produce, gardening and pest control. He is a statistician who researches methods to develop more successful techniques for growing food. I wondered about his young daughter and her sexual fantasies as I read about this teenage woman who was accused of such a horrible crime. My niece was years from being a teen. I wondered, though, if my brother would find this historical novel as compelling as I did. There was this sense of my life moving on to free ideas, into steady meditations.

The books I had read during the hospital stay included one about a college professor traveling to India, one about a Greek shipping family (probably the Onassis clan), one about black women in a variety of sexual relationships, one about an Egyptian king and his harem, and a couple of others that were such quick reads that they slipped unnoticed from my memory. I looked up from my reading. Before long the young woman had disembarked at her stop. I moved to the window seat. A Japanese businessman sat next to me. The train felt

wonderfully modern and full of people who looked so different from the people with whom I had lived for three weeks.

Now, reflecting back on those weeks I feel an odd sense of privilege. As an educated, middle-class, white schizophrenic, the time spent with the mixture of young and old, black, Asian, African, Puerto Rican and white, downtrodden and unique seemed so worth the time. I know few people are able to cross worlds of such diversity as I do, and it is something both soothing and frightening. There is a sense of humility, somewhat forced, but totally real, that I resonate to.

I changed trains in Washington. In the station, I found a pharmacy, got some suppositories for my hemorrhoids and a fiber supplement. I browsed a bookstore, walked outside and checked out a fountain on a traffic island. The train station was quite grand, with the tile floors, the tall pillars, the railings and the high ceilings with skylights. On the way to New York, I had stayed in the waiting area and never saw what the station had to offer.

I was on the same train I had ridden east. I recognized the porters, the only blacks on the train. Soon I settled into an observation car. A man with a khaki multi-pocketed vest doing a crossword on a tiny clipboard caught my attention. He had close-cropped gray hair, a good tan, and was working the puzzle in ink, peering with red-edged eyes through wire-rimmed reading lenses. The train was in Virginia,

passing through the university campus. I struck up a conversation with the man. Awkwardly at first, but with growing patience, we took to one another. I think it started when he offered me a newspaper.

“See those steps?” he asked. “Yes,” I said as the train pulled through a kind of outdoor theater with grass and concrete steps.

“There was a photo,” he stopped talking, turned to a corrugated cardboard trashcan and rummaged through it, pulling out yesterday’s *Washington Post*. He flipped through the paper and handed me the section folded back.

“A girl from Texas my granddaughter’s age with cancer.”

His voice was low, obviously moved by the article.

“What kind of cancer?” I asked.

I read and looked at the photo, been taken just days before. The young woman was pictured in the outdoor theater. She had traveled with her family to Virginia for an experimental treatment.

“Are you a doctor?” he asked.

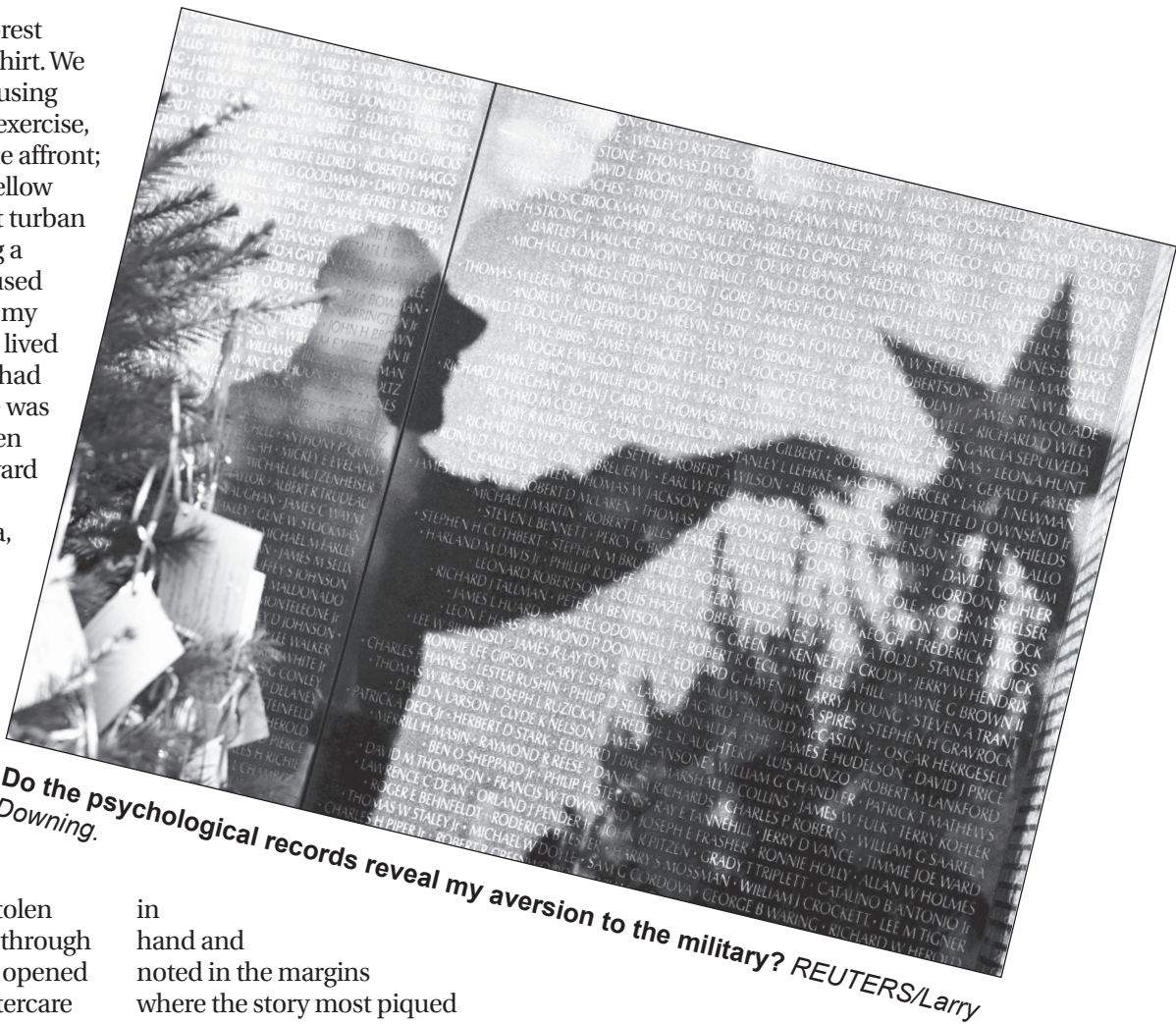
“No,” I said, “but my mother has cancer.”

“I’m sorry,” he said. “I have leukemia but it is in total remission.”

I looked at him again. He was fairly thin, well put together, with workman’s shoes, blue jeans.

“The way you asked, and your appearance, I thought maybe you were a physician.”

See **Meditations**, P. 12



Do the psychological records reveal my aversion to the military? REUTERS/Larry Downing.



## Meditations Continued from page 11

"No, I'm a writer and a teacher."

I noticed a bullet hole in the glass of the observation car above us. My paranoia did not flare at the sight of the bullet hole, but it registered for a moment. Something about this man in this setting seemed to work with the bullet hole, adding a slightly fearful dimension to the conversation. There was some open land with a huge house in the distance on a hill, hidden by foliage. He noticed my attention to the landscape.

"Do you know what that is?" he asked.

"No."

"It's Monticello."

I looked again.

"I've taken this trip many times. I'm on my way to my granddaughter's high school graduation in West Virginia. I live in Baltimore. It's easy to drive to D.C. and take the train from there. Too short a distance to fly, anyway the airport is two hours from the town."

I had a sense that I had connected with a raconteur. Easing back into the seat, I wondered if I could keep this civil. A heavyset balding fellow in blue jeans and a crimson sweater with a mustache and bushy eyebrows moved through the car followed by his son. The man noticed the pins on my new companion's vest and commented, slowing his hike through the train car.

"Are you a Boy Scout leader?" the man asked.

"These are military decorations."

He frowned in disapproval, and a sense of feeling offended hung in his tone.

"It's Flag Day."

The man lowered his head and moved by without apology.

After a moment, I asked, "Where did you serve?"

"In Vietnam."

"What branch?"

"Marines." He paused. "That was rude of him."

From the look on his face I knew he had seen combat and it had taken a lot out of him.

"What do you do now?"

"Semi-retired. But I was an equine photographer."

This explained the many-pocketed vest. A niche so specific. My curiosity was piqued.

"In the sporting sense? You photographed race horses?" I asked.

"Yes, for magazines and newspapers."

"Did you write articles, too?"

"No, not usually. Sometimes I would write captions, but usually I worked with a writer. There were times where the writer would have photo ideas, or I might have a story angle connected with a series of photos."

"My ex-wife is a racing buff. Did you photograph The Derby?"

"Yes. I covered some of the major stories, but mostly I worked for a Baltimore daily doing human-interest pieces that sometimes got picked up for syndicated use. I did a piece about a girl that cleaned stables at Churchill Downs. She was the granddaughter of a famous jockey. Those photos ended up everywhere. My editor helped me get pictures of a trainer's family that had ancestors with connections to Irish royalty. I worked with some great editors over the years."

"I heard on NPR about this new book on Seabiscuit."

"Great book," he said. "I just sent the author a drawing of Seabiscuit that hung in my office for years."

"You know her?"

He took a breath.

"My editor contacted her publicist. The publicist wouldn't give my editor contact information, but passed word on to the author. She's real protective. A famous equine artist who is dead now did the drawing. It's a valuable piece and she didn't understand my generosity. I think she thought I was trying to sell it. But it hung in my office for years, and I had had enough of it. You know, I just felt like she would get more out of it than I would. I had enjoyed it, but it seemed the thing to do. So, she accepted it. I shipped it to her and got a nice thank you note. That was worth it."

Now, knowing he was a Vietnam veteran, I wanted to talk about his war experience; I sensed he had something to share. I wanted to ask him: Do we study Vietnam to do better in the next conflict, to avoid being in conflict, to understand better how different

people, cultures and races

can thrive mutually and convivially with open trade, free communication and welfare for all? What about a universal doctrine encouraging pursuit of happiness? But this conversation wasn't ready for such directed dialogue. Am I too paranoid to suggest that what must be learned is to move away from war toward meditation? Is art a solution to a peaceful time? Does war come and go like the wind? Can I be a warrior without taking up a weapon against an unknown assailant? Is joining an army the first wrong step? Even conscription can be circumvented. There must be an alternative if one believes in honest individuality and nonviolence. Civility. I cannot move out of the civil discourse. Civil disobedience is only understood as a mass movement while individual anarchic acts are seen as behavioral deviance or mental instability. The state reacts to aberrant behavior by trapping dissenters and medicating them, creating the therapeutic state. Who could disagree with that? Am I a dissenter or ill? Maybe both.

The photographer spoke in a quiet way.

"My brother-in-law, Ola, was a famous Danish contemporary writer. I talked to him often about his writing when I visited my sister. What do you write about?"

"I collect moments," I said. "Lately, the ones that have stirred me have been in performance when I was playing harmonica with a folk group in Cincinnati called Jake Speed and the Freddies. Playing the harmonica involves a set of complex breathing techniques. The breathing calls to mind meditation, and when I think of moments, I feel the breathing that stays calm within them. In writing, I try to capture moments where some situation and combination of ideas meld to generate a story."

He let me finish and let the words stay in the air.

"Ola used to talk about moments. He would get the same tone of voice, the same thrill I hear in you."

"A spiritual advisor of mine tells me that what is real is what perceives the breath, the knower, the presence that is life itself."

He listened intently, nodding his head up and down. I think we both saw what would come next in this conversation, a deeper degree of intimacy. I wondered if we

talked about Vietnam and war if I would boil with anger. He had no idea that I had been in a Trenton State Mental Hospital for three weeks. The Geodon appeared to be holding me now. All that had changed with the new medication was the schedule. I took it in the mornings 20 minutes after a full breakfast instead of at bedtime. The train moved, swaying from side to side, through sunny, wooded, Virginia hills.

"My favorite Vietnam novel is *Going After Cacciato* by Tim O'Brien. His *The Things They Carried* is powerful, too."

Before he could respond I let

my thoughts lead me into a meditation: Vietnam Era literature by survivors of the conflict is a necessary result of war. Ideas about courage and conflict contrast with the depersonalization of death. Ideological conflicts that lead to war have a millenarian history. What future utopia might be possible if everyone on the planet could learn from the Vietnam War? But each war presents differently to theorists. It's not like men and women in orange jumpsuits and scrubs could just come and sterilize the remains and bury them with dark steel spades in wet earth. The whole thing seems never to go away nor should it. Is it ignorance that causes conflicts? Are they premeditated? Why should tolerance be so necessary with each breath? I was caught in this field of attachment. What I needed to remember is that there have always been wars, there will always be wars, and to just watch and take the perspective of George Carlin, who says something like, "If people want to kill each other, let 'em. I can't control other people; I can just watch and enjoy the ride. I know that my role is just to point out what's funny about it, follow on the legacy of Lenny Bruce."

I think I said something like that to this new acquaintance on the train as I was finding another side of myself. I wanted to listen to him, to hear his pain.

"Tim O'Brien is good. The *Things They Carried* is amazing. There is a new Vietnam Reader that I've seen. Do you have any interest in teaching a course on Vietnam literature?"

"No. Not that I'm not interested, but my focus has been on homeless literature. The connection to Vietnam tends to be when the homeless veteran enters my field. Miss America has taken the homeless-veteran problem as her issue, but I don't know of any literature that connects the Vietnam veteran and homelessness. Most of the veterans I've come across have been socially and economically integrated into society."

"When you teach homeless literature what texts do you use?"

"There are many, ranging from personal accounts like Lars Eighner's to George Orwell's novel from the '30s. I include a counter-culture classic by Gurney Norman from the seventies and the Buddhist perspective by essayist Gary Snyder. I'm still developing the course idea and I hope to teach after I finish my degree. Currently I don't have a teaching job; I'm finishing my thesis memoir."

I think I was beginning to bore him. I was losing interest in conversation.

"I think I'll take a smoke," he said, excusing himself and heading for the smoking car. I had passed by it before. It was a half a car with ashtrays and haze. It reminded me of smoking rooms in mental institutions.

I'm going to change the way this chapter is constructed for a few lines to attend to some details that now aren't clear in memory. The photographer talked passionately about the author Sherwood Anderson and his book *Winesburg, Ohio*. He reported that a developer had demolished the author's house. To the town's credit, his office was preserved in a museum or library, but the structure that originally housed it no longer exists. This story held my interest only marginally and



Did the retired railroad personnel take the train because they feared flying?  
REUTERS/Marcelo del Pozo.



**Meditations** Continued from page 11

I don't know why it slips from detailed account to summary other than my ignorance about Anderson and his text. Later in the summer I picked up a used paperback copy and read much of it until I discovered insects living in the binding. After that I just tossed it onto the tile porch; only partially hidden from the elements, the pages quickly yellowed and turned to leaves. Before I cast the novel aside I was struck by how much the characters reminded me of people in my own neighborhood, especially the undertone of dysfunction. I was coming to understand the story of mental illness is not unusual or rare; it appears in small towns and large cities, in women and men, young and old, of all backgrounds. It does not even respect religious or economic differences. I wonder now how much this traveling acquaintance inferred about me from our dialogue.

Community paranoia exists in the coffeehouses where I write these narratives, the therapeutic state is talked about as a government that controls its population by medicating them. Imagine how much George Carlin would enjoy watching a U.S.A. where the pharmacies no longer had psychoactive drugs. I think of one of my favorite films from my adolescence, *King of Hearts*. In it a French town is occupied by Germans in World War I while the insane asylum's inmates are accidentally let loose to populate the village, instead of the villagers, who fled when warned. It is touching and humorous, and the conclusion seems to indicate that the insane are gentler and healthier than the sane. I wonder sometimes about this but my counselor assures me that I am truly out of balance and at risk of being killed when I am off my medication. I couldn't bring all this into the conversation on the train with anyone. And I was still out of balance while precariously managing to stay out of trouble for now. My anxiety continued as my companion said goodbye. I went to the dining car for dinner.

I sat with three others and introduced myself. I felt a bit of self-loathing as a middle-aged woman with short, mousy, brown hair and a small, straight nose introduced herself as a retired prison guard from Oregon. She left her job to travel around America by Amtrak and now was returning to face finding another job. I don't remember much about her traveling companion except that she was heavier and they seemed to be a lesbian couple, conservatively dressed and trying to fit into the background. Then in a burst, the man across from me, who was balding, thin, in a pale blue, button-down sweater took off his horn-rim glasses and while wiping them

on a white handkerchief told about the rolling White House on this track and the WWII hidden bunkers on this train's run. As I listened, I wondered if the current government has an official train and if the retired officers who travel by Amtrak are in service still, or if they ride the train because they are frightened of air travel. It came as a flash of conspiracy theory discomfoting and setting my paranoid thoughts afire for a few minutes. Then I ate my steak and potato without saying much about myself. I sensed that if I did disclose who I was, I'd be just like them; and that might have been better than feeling what I felt, but I wasn't capable of being a healthy member of this society with its necessary right wing hypocrisy. My anxiety now kept me from riding elevators in buildings taller than 12 stories. I would always ask, when entering a modern skyscraper, is there a way to do this by stairs?

After dining with these three and never learning what the bald man did for a living, I paced back through the rocking train cars to my seat, where I returned to reading Margaret Atwood and dozing. As it got dark it got harder to read. The lights kept failing when the train stopped for fuel and water and other reasons that were never explained. I talked briefly with a couple across the aisle. The man was a bit of a long hair, and turned out to be a composer returning to make his dissertation defense at the College-Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati. His wife had an eastern European accent. We talked until we tired of things to say. With a mutual sigh, we all sat still as the train bumped slowly along that final turn over the dark Ohio River.

It had been nearly 20 years since I had had a stay in a facility as rough as this one had been. I had told myself then that, if faced with a state facility again, I'd rather take my own life. Here I was, not thinking such thoughts at all. Relieved that Dr. Nuñez had had the courage to keep me on Geodon. It was just a matter of adjustment. I would see my counselor in Cincinnati. I would finish the reading list, take my oral exam for my master's degree and then get a teaching job.

A sense of relief swept through me when the train stopped at Union Terminal. In the dark Cincinnati morning my gray Toyota shone in the amber streetlight of the empty parking lot. I keyed the door after flipping my brown pack into the cluttered trunk. As I sat down I saw the dead daisy fallen, withered and stuck to the side of the clear Stewart's Orange Creamsicle bottle standing in the drink holder between the seats.

Poetry

**My Friends and Me**

By Willa Denise Jones

In today's world it's hard to be able to call anyone a true friend  
But I was blessed with two in my life and that's the way it's always been  
I was blessed in grade school with these two people who never left my side  
In good times, bad times, sad or happy times my friends they didn't mind  
We became close by sharing our differences about people, places and things  
Before long we invented a club called "Ladies Only" in our hearts we sang  
We recruited a few to the club but their friendship only lasted for a little while  
Ten years later the club is still open, my friends and me are in for long the mile  
We began to trust, believe and share our belief only to each other from our heart  
Never knowing that God had our friendship, God had us three right from the start  
Today we still come together periodically for club meetings "Ladies Only"  
And it's open to only us for to be without the club we'd truly be lonely  
So we keep in touch and we talk about men, stress and all kinds of attitudes  
We talk about what's the right way, the wrong way and how to stop the blues  
Being older now with the understanding of women's needs are everyday  
So have someone you can confide in is a God sent all of the way  
Yes, I have been blessed with two friends and to God I will always thank you  
Thank you for your so many blessing, thank you for me, Vee and Bratty too!

**What Am I**

By Elisa Hill

I am a dove flying in a sky of bluish gray.  
I am a rock lying at the end of the driveway just sitting idly by, while the wind plays.  
I am the tension in your mind that causes you to scream.  
I am the electrical current that brings you the energy.  
I am taller than the Empire State Building in the fantasy of your mind.  
I am the sweetness in the cake that gets finished in just the nick of time.  
I am the conductor to the train that is running softly but, internally through your soul.  
I am the puncture wound that left a scar upon your nose.  
I am the seeker of just who you need to be.  
I am the redeemer of your life encased in a sweet dream.  
I am the postcard they forget to write before they go.  
I am the government protecting all that you conceive to be real and untold.  
I am the past time that keeps you still in the moments of calm.  
I am not reality with the clearness of your mind.  
I am the thing that causes satisfaction to your soul to unwind.  
I am a daydream, a silly thought that yet unfolds.  
Still you ask, "What are you, this thing in my mind?"  
What I am is just a moment in time to see unclearly and have a distorted view.  
I am the sensitivity to light that you seem to hold on to.  
So with every blink of your wondering eye,  
I am something different floating aimlessly in your mind.

Say what?!

They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself.  
– Andy Warhol

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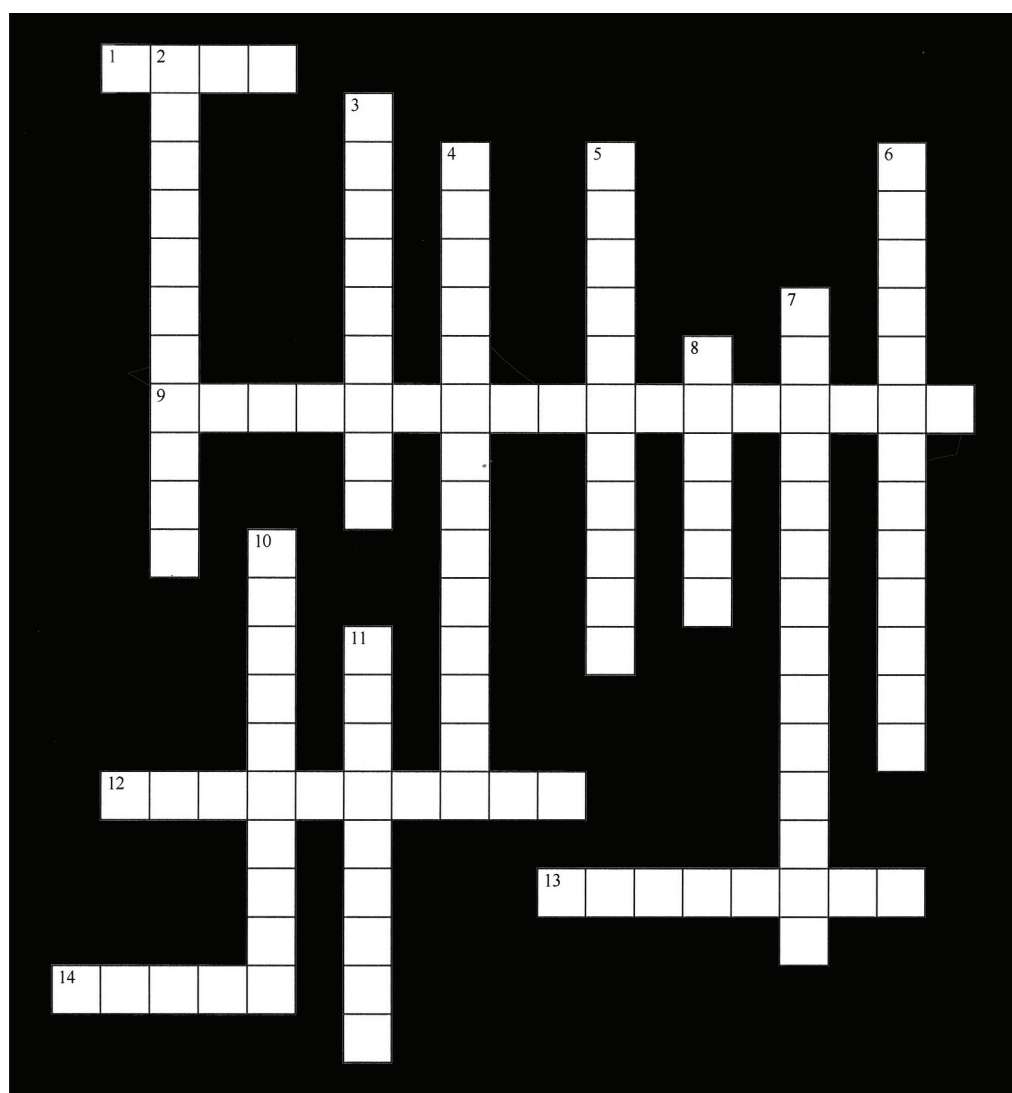
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## Crossword



## ACROSS

- 1 Controls Fountain Square
- 9 The key to ending homelessness
- 12 His image ominously towers over Over-the-Rhine
- 13 Its publisher is on the board of 3CDC
- 14 3CDC will tear them down in Washington Park

## DOWN

- 2 The military dictator for whom the city is named
- 3 Hero of Cincinnati's homeless people
- 4 It's illegal to distribute 'Streetvibes' on this public property
- 5 Wanted to tax panhandlers
- 6 Emergency refuge for homeless people
- 7 Where graves are being desecrated to build a parking garage
- 8 The tool city council is using to restrict social-service agencies
- 10 The transportation boondoggle that's supposed to reinvigorate the city
- 11 Subsidized housing taken over by 3CDC to build a luxury hotel



[www.facebook.com/streetvibes\\_cincinnati](http://www.facebook.com/streetvibes_cincinnati)

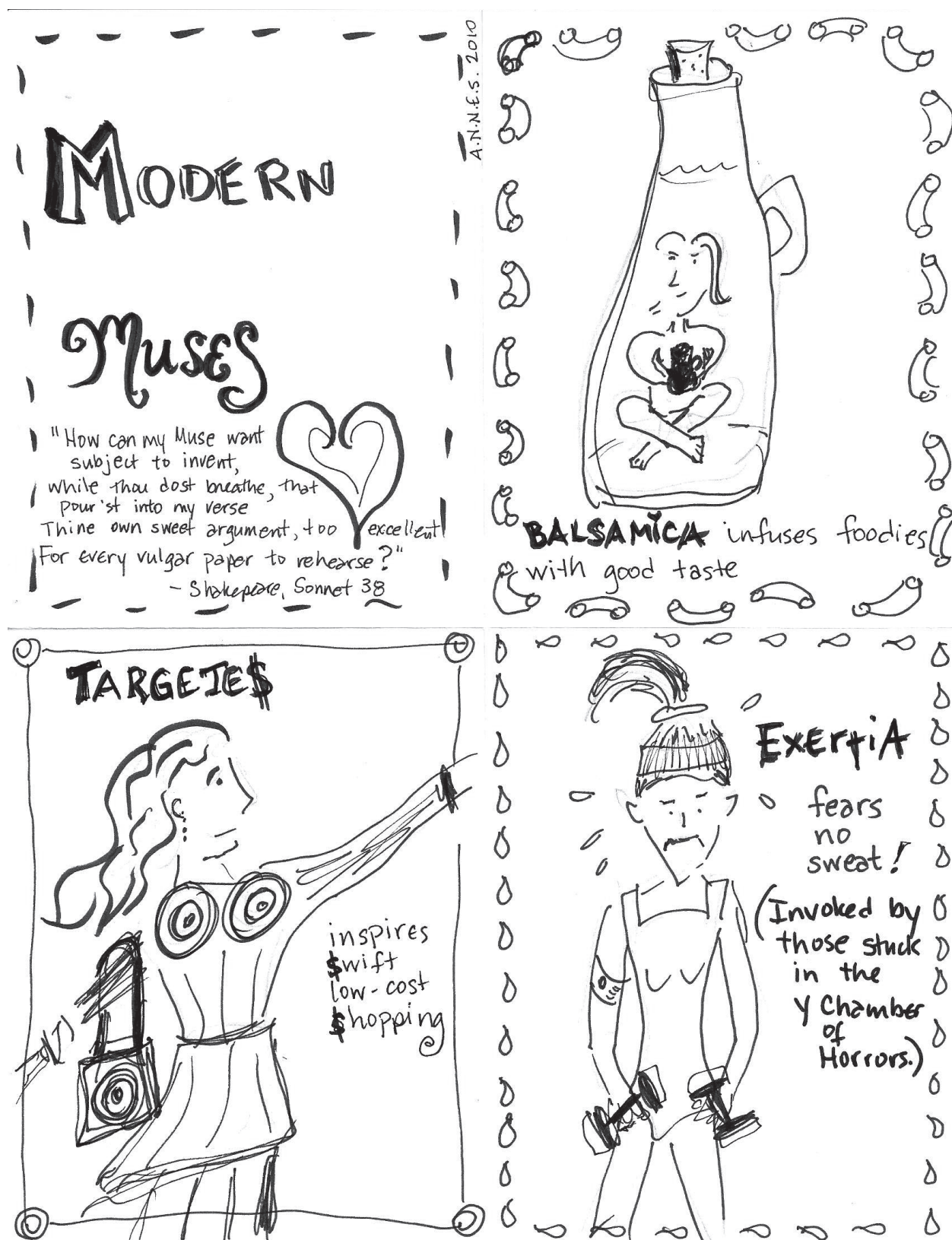


[twitter.com/streetvibesnews](http://twitter.com/streetvibesnews)



[streetvibes.wordpress.com](http://streetvibes.wordpress.com)

## Cartoon By Anne Skove





Shelter: Women and Children

Central Access Point	381-SAFE
Cincinnati Union Bethel	768-6907
300 Lytle Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Bethany House	557-2873
1841 Fairmount Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45214	
Grace Place Catholic Worker House	681-2365
6037 Cary Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45224	
Salvation Army	762-5660
131 E. 12th Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
YWCA Battered Women’s Shelter	872-9259

Shelter: Men

City Gospel Mission	241-5525
1419 Elm Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Justice Watch	241-0490
St. Fran/St. Joe Catholic Work. House	381-4941
1437 Walnut Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Mt. Airy Shelter	661-4620

Shelter: Both

Anthony House (Youth)	961-4080
2728 Glendora Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45209	
Caracole (HIV/AIDS)	761-1480
1821 Summit Road, Cinti, Ohio 45237	
Drop Inn Center	721-0643
217 W. 12th Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Interfaith Hospitality Network	471-1100
Lighthouse Youth Center (Youth)	221-3350
3330 Jefferson, Cinti, Ohio 45220	

Housing:

CMHA	721-4580
Excel Development	632-7149
OTR Community Housing	381-1171
114 W. 14th Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Tender Mercies	721-8666
27 W. 12th Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Tom Geiger House	961-4555
Dana Transitional Bridge Services	751-0643
Volunteers of America	381-1954
Anna Louise Inn	421-5211

Food/Clothing

Lord’s Pantry	621-5300
OTR/Walnut Hills Kitchen & Pantry	961-1983
OTR: 1620 Vine Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Walnut Hills: 2631 Gilbert, Cinti, Ohio 45206	
Our Daily Bread	621-6364
1730 Race Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	

St. Francis Soup Kitchen	535-2719
Churches Active in Northside	591-2246
4230 Hamilton Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45223	
FreeStore/FoodBank	241-1064
112 E. Liberty Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Madisonville Ed & Assistance Center	271-5501
4600 Erie Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45227	
Serves area codes: 45226, 45227, 45208, 45209	
St. Vincent de Paul	562-8841
1125 Bank Street, Cinti, Ohio 45214	

Treatment: Men

Charlie’s 3/4 House	784-1853
2121 Vine Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Prospect House	921-1613
682 Hawthorne Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45205	
Starting Over	961-2256

Treatment: Women

First Step Home	961-4663
2203 Fulton, Cinti, Ohio 45206	

Treatment: Both

AA Hotline	351-0422
CCAT	381-6672
830 Ezzard Charles Dr. Cinti, Ohio 45214	
Joseph House (Veterans)	241-2965
1522 Republic Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Hamilton County ADAS Board	946-4888
Recovery Health Access Center	281-7422
Sober Living	681-0324
Talbert House	641-4300

Advocacy

Catholic Social Action	421-3131
Community Action Agency	569-1840
Contact Center	381-4242
1227 Vine Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Franciscan JPIC	721-4700
Gr. Cinti Coalition for the Homeless	421-7803
117 E. 12th Street, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Intercommunity Justice & Peace Cr.	579-8547
Legal Aid Society	241-9400
Ohio Justice & Policy Center	421-1108
Faces Without Places	363-3300
Stop AIDS	421-2437

Health

Center for Respite Care	621-1868
3550 Washington Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45229	

Crossroad Health Center	381-2247
5 E. Liberty St. Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Health Resource Center	357-4602
Homeless Mobile Health Van	352-2902
McMicken Dental Clinic	352-6363
40 E. McMicken Ave, Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Mental Health Access Point	558-8888
Mercy Franciscan at St. John	981-5800
1800 Logan St. Cinti, Ohio 45202	
NAMI of Hamilton County	458-6670
PATH Outreach	977-4489

Other Resources

Center Independent Living Options	241-2600
Emmanuel Community Center	241-2563
1308 Race St. Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Peaslee Neighborhood Center	621-5514
214 E. 14th St. Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Franciscan Haircuts from the Heart	381-0111
1800 Logan St. Cinti, Ohio 45202	
Goodwill industries	771-4800
Healing Connections	751-0600
Mary Magdalen House	721-4811
1223 Main St. Cinti, Ohio 45202	
People Working Cooperatively	351-7921
The Caring Place	631-1114
United Way	211
Women Helping Women	977-5541
Off The Streets	421-5211

Hamilton/Middletown

St. Raephaels	863-3184
Salvation Army	863-1445
Serenity House Day Center	422-8555
Open Door Pantry	868-3276

Northern Kentucky

Brighton Center	859-491-8303
799 Ann St. Newport, KY	
ECHO/Hosea House	859-261-5857
Fairhaven Resuce Mission	859-491-1027
Homeward Bound Youth	859-581-1111
Mathews House	859-261-8009
Homeless & Housing Coalition	859-727-0926
Parish Kitchen	859-581-7745
Pike St. Clinic	859-291-9321
Transitions, Inc	859-491-4435
Welcome House of NKY	859-431-8717
205 West Pike Street, Covington, KY 41011	
Women’s Crisis Center	859-491-3335
VA Domiciliary	859-559-5011
VA Homeless	859-572-6226

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# Art Inspired by Race, Riots and Rap

## Artists as Activists

By SAAD GHOSN  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

### Terence Hammonds's sub-cultural view

In his first year of college, Terence Hammonds was asked to do a cultural portrait of himself; he did not know what to do. The assignment, however, stayed with him and raised many questions in his mind about cultural identity and belonging, questions that have since then determined the content and direction of his art.

Hammonds, an African-American artist born and raised in Over-the-Rhine, always drew as a child. Recognizing his artistic inclinations, his mother enrolled him in the School for the Creative and Performing Arts. There he met two teachers who greatly influenced him. Kathleen Carothers, a drama teacher, regularly took him to the museum, asking him each time to write a paper on an art piece of his choosing, triggering early on his critical thinking about visual images. John Brengelman, an English teacher and musician, gave him records and books, introducing him to underground art and the subculture of music.

Throughout school, Hammonds got good exposure to various art media and developed skills in many of them. He was then obsessed with John Lennon and many times drew the Dakota Hotel where Lennon died. Hammonds also painted homeless people and alcoholics in his neighborhood, connecting to city life and its social ills.

After graduating from high school, Hammonds received a full scholarship to the School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston at Tufts University, where he later earned a bachelor of fine arts degree. His college years helped him refine his visual language; they also made him think culturally about the world and where he fits.

Rap music was very popular at the time and somewhat synonymous with black urban youth; Hammonds listened to it all the time. He did a series of silkscreen prints, titled *Temporary Tattoos*, representing tattoos of famous rap stars; the prints could be temporarily transferred onto someone's skin. It was also his take on the idea of original and real, a tenet of the hip hop culture. Along the same line, he made fancy-looking, fake *Certificates of Provenance* for commonly used slang terms, pointing to ownership.

"I was very interested in what mainstream culture thought of differing subcultures, of their relation to race and class in history," he says.

Questioning the fixed and framed identity one might give a diverse subculture, in this case associating rap music to black race, Hammonds covered his studio floor with subway tiles on which he printed the first reproduced image of a break dancer. By not cleaning the screen between printings, the images became intentionally blurred. They served as his commentary on the change the hip hop movement underwent, progressing from the Bronx in New York City to other parts of the United States and also on the various multi-ethnic influences it incorporated.

In his last year of college Hammonds did a large installation at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. It consisted of silhouettes of rap dancers and images of the first 250 rap artists to record music, all silkscreened on a wall paper patterned after the plantation in *Gone With the*



Above: Terence Hammonds stands in front of his silkscreen print, *Nina Simone*. Saad Ghosn.



Left: *Get Up on the Down Stroke*, 4'x4' wood dance floor with graphite drawings and silkscreened images by Terence Hammonds. Tony Walsh.

*Wind*. Exhibited at the same time, displayed in a broken antique cabinet, were old Haviland Limoges plates on which he printed images of the first break dancers. The cabinet had a broken leg, propped up by first-edition books from the Civil Rights Movement, books of slave songs containing coded messages, books by Leroy Jones and Langston Hughes. It was his reference to the origin of hip hop culture, fed at its base by the cultural history of the African-American people, also an allusion to it being a precious, yet poorly handled, gift.

Returning to Cincinnati after six years in Boston, Hammonds continued to examine in his art the identity and history of subcultures in the United States, the role of protest and rebellion in the Civil Rights Movement and its importance for freedom and democracy.

"I am reaping the benefit of the Civil Rights Movement, of the fight so many undertook, at the expense of their own lives, to allow each of us freedom in this country," he says. "I went to an Ivy League school with full scholarship just based on merit; I can freely express myself. ... This was unheard of 50 years ago for African Americans."

*Quiet Riot*, his first show in Cincinnati, was based on a real story that followed the death of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Fearing riots, the mayor of Boston invited all residents to protest King's assassination and mourn together by watching a concert by James Brown, the "Godfather of Soul," on TV. Boston remained riot-free, with popular music a factor.

In his show, Hammonds played a video of the concert on a 1960-era TV. He printed images of the riots that happened in Cincinnati and all over America on a set of Russel Wright dinner plates called "American Modern" and displayed two miniature dance floors, each 4'x4', covered with

silkscreened images of riots.

Further illustrating the Civil Rights Movement and its influence on American life, Hammonds later did four additional dance floors. One of them, *Get Up on the Down Stroke*, is titled after a line from a folk song. It consists of a wood board decorated with graphite drawings and prints of images from the '60s and '70s counter-cultural movements, riots, draft-card burnings, scenes from the Rolling Stones concert in Altamont and from the Kent State massacre.

"My images meant to evoke an era now gone, a time when youth was idealistic, not afraid to change the world," he says. "The dance floors (are) spaces where cultures are exchanged."

In his work, Hammonds will persevere, addressing subcultures, protest and authority. He views his art as monuments celebrating the activist movements of the past and hopefully the present.

"I want my artwork to remind of a time when people fought for the better good of the entire humanity," he says. "I want the youth to look back, realize that history existed and that it can be reinvented. Raising me, my mother always stressed the duty to give to society, to contribute positively to life. It is a lesson I will never forget."

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*Artists as Activists is a regular column highlighting Greater Cincinnati artists who use art as a vehicle for change. Saad Ghosn is the founder of SOS Art. Ghosn can be contacted at saad.ghosn@uc.edu.*